

OOPS. The Black Man is ruffled. Here we are, 40 minutes into the set. This place should be in uproar. The seats should be reduced to match-wood. The audience is enthusiastic but, apart from a couple of extremists on the wings, remains fixed to the seats. Nevertheless, it's claimed that they're enjoying themselves.

"Za Hambu'g audience," the promoter assures us, "it is very hard to getzem on ze feet."

At this point in Southern Germany, Thin Lizzy had already secured the devotion of what was hitherto an alien audience. In Saarbrücken and Offenbach, there were no such barriers. Offenbach, indeed, induced the best performance I've seen Lizzy give in the last two years.

Anyway, Hamburg is reluctant, and its shyness plainly irritates Phil Lynott. Earlier, in an uncharacteristic fit of temper, he had threatened to cancel the gig when the local fire chief declared that Lizzy could not use their flash bombs within the hallowed interiors of the Musichalle.

"Tell your boss," Lynott muttered at a harassed emissary, "that if we can't use them then we're not goin' on."

It should be noted, mind you, that Phil's peculiar outburst wasn't exactly taken seriously by the rest of the band. Gary Moore was outside caving with a friend. Scott Gorham dozed on the couch — Scott had overdosed it a bit the night before on the sleeping tablets, when he popped ten times the dosage he intended to take — and Brian Downey sipped champagne.

Lynott, though, persisted with the charade, determined to knock the fear of God into the Germans. His anger had been fuelled by the news that there would be no soundcheck. It would be a late start, 10.30 pm, two hours later than any other night, because in an adjoining hall there was a piano recital and it was feared that this loud rock music might interfere with the audience's enjoyment. At this announcement, Lynott turned reddish-black — a sort of dark brown — with rage.

"A piano recital." He heard right. "No soundcheck because of a piano recital!" "Fook that. We're usin' the flashes, no matter what the fookin' fire chief says. Okay, Finbar." Finbar is in charge of the lights and effects. One of his lackeys had just dismantled the fireworks, having been informed that they would not be needed. "A fookin' piano recital." Phil strode around the dressing room. "Jesus. We're a rock 'n' roll band, not a fookin' showband. These people have come to see the full Thin Lizzy show, an' they're



Reflecting on an 'image'?

Deutschland liebt Lizzy

Phil and da boyz invade Germany. HARRY DOHERTY went on the sortie and watched Lizzy win over what had once been an alien audience.

gonna see it."

This was his first concession to the possibility that the gig would happen. Contingency plans were laid in the event of plugs being pulled by frightened city officials, who might have been persuaded that Hamburg was under attack when the flashes went off.

Lizzy went on and used their flashes. Perhaps the hall officials headed for the nearest bomb shelter, because they didn't interfere with the show. But, by then Lynott had other things on his mind. From out front, you could almost hear his brain click: "Jesus, what do we have to do to get these people on their feet?"

But, by "Cowboy Song" — "We're gonna try an' rock you with this one" — he was obviously overcome by the situation. For a second he stepped out of the spot-light and out of tune.

"It's okay, amigos," he sang sweetly. "YOU CAN LET YOURSELVES GO!" Whatever, it took another ten minutes before the audience took his advice, abandoning their impassive stance and looking as if they were actually enjoying themselves. The relief was general.

Backstage, Lynott applied the old football analogy: "Wait'll we get them at home." He shook a few hands. Scott dozed again on the settee. Gary rapped to his mate. Brian sipped champagne.

"It's all happening," the effervescent Chris O'Donnell, Thin Lizzy's manager, had shouted down the phone a few days earlier.

Huh? "In Europe. Well, you know we haven't exactly concentrated on Europe for a couple of years. We haven't even played in Germany for over two years, but it's all suddenly happening."

Oh yeah, Chris, happening. "Yeah, Scandinavia was amazing. Now they're in Germany. In Cologne the other night, Rory Gallagher got up and jammed with them. The crowd went nuts."

Nuts, Chris. "Yeah, are you coming out to see?"

Twist my arm, Chris.

SAARBRÜCKEN is a sneeze on the road from Frankfurt to Paris, the sort of place you want to beam out of instead of waiting for the next train. I found Thin Lizzy experiencing the same sentiments on a dark, threatening Sunday afternoon. If you want to measure Lizzy's low-key reputation in Germany, consider that I came across Phil Lynott in the car-park, wondering when the audience was going to come, and from where.

Lynott and company cast a single glance at industrial Saarbrücken and decided that, instead of staying put that night, they'd move on to Frankfurt, 200 kilometres away, after the gig. Throughout the Lizzy camp, it was generally felt that Saarbrücken might not recover from a night of Phil Lynott.

Eventually an audience did materialise in the town. As with many of the gigs in Southern Germany, a fair proportion of the crowd consisted of GIs from local US bases. It was easy to pick them out in the 1,600 or so at this gig. Scott Gorham retreated to the dressing-room with tales of his encounters with hapless GIs.

"Gawd," he sighed wearily. "All these GIs come up and stare at me and point at my hair." I remember Scott's long, flowing mane, girls? — and say "Hey, man, my hair was that length before I was caught. When I escape, I'm gonna grow it again. Say, wanna see a photograph of me before I was caught?" No thanks, pal. Gawd.

The gig itself was a solid if unspectacular Lizzy performance, a case in point of the principle Lynott would later impart about the band's norm being a good gig, even if they themselves didn't enjoy it.

But they did seem to enjoy Saarbrücken, even treating the ecstatic audience to an impromptu version of "Whiskey In The Jar." Ever since that old standard reappeared at Hammersmith Odeon on the last tour, its performance has seemed to be an indication of Lizzy's pleasure with the audience reaction.

The sound in the Congresshalle, which wasn't conducive to clear rock reproduction anyway, was rather on the painfully loud side, a matter which sound engineer Pete Eustace took up with the Lizzies afterwards.

"You and acoustic halls don't mix very well," Pete offered. "I thought I was going to get knifed out there. People were yelling at me to turn it down."

Gorham disagreed. "At the front they were lovin' the hell out of it." "Yeah, but it's cannon fodder to them," Eustace counters, determined to impress his point upon the band. "At the back the cotton wool was falling out of people's ears."

"That wasn't cotton wool," Gary Moore smartly comments. "That was their brains."

Eustace's protests fell on (ahem) deaf ears, while we headed for Frankfurt. And Cookie's.

COOKIE is a leading figure in the Frankfurt rock community. Once responsible for booking major bands into the city, his interest is now confined to a



Bumps and grinds with Lynott

couple of clubs. The one we're in is attempting to offer an alternative to the standard German disco by playing a selection that includes the best of accepted disco and some straight rock music.

Cookie first met Lizzy when he booked the band, as a four-piece with Gorham and Brian Robertson, into the Zoom Club, a now-defunct heavy joint in Frankfurt. Lizzy remembered the faith he showed in them, and renewed the acquaintance when they came back to Germany this time round.

Cookie has a pool table in the front room of his city-centre home. At 6 a.m., after a night spent in his club, we're invited there for a game. Three hours later, Lynott and I have breakfast before going to bed, shattered. I remember him mumbling something like "It's gonna be a wild three days" as we say good morning.

There's a track on the new Thin Lizzy album, "Black Rose — A Rock Legend," called "Got To Give It Up." It extols the virtues of clean living, with Lynott suggesting that he (or the character in the song) intends to give up drugs and drink among other excesses. At 9 a.m. on a Monday morning, after a night like that, the song doesn't carry such a sincere ring.

"I'm being a bit cynical with 'Got To Give It Up,'" Lynott admits later in the day. "How many times do you say you're gonna give something up and you don't? It's that perpetual thing where you can't break the habit. I mean, I'm trying to be really honest in the song. Like on 'With Love,' too. I wanted to achieve total honesty and also write a love song, and I say 'This Casanova's days are over, more or less.' It's the 'more or less' that's the honest bit. It shows the human elements, the wanting."

"When I was writing those songs, those were the moods I was trying to capture. I did mean what I said. It's honest contradictions. If my life was a simple black and white — he chuckles at the irony — "if it was just straightforward, it would be easy to write songs. I wouldn't wrestle with lyrics at all. I would just have to say, 'I love

you, the sky is blue.' But it's not like that at all. It's all so much more complicated. 'Got To Give It Up' is to do with trying to give up bad habits — when you know that you don't really stand a chance."

But the song really lays the addiction on the line. There's so much desperation in its tone.

"Yeah, but it's not just me. It's relevant to a lot of people. I try to give these things up. I really do try, with all the sincerity I can, for brief periods, to give it up. "I don't condone drugs, really, but I know why artists take drugs. They take them to experience, to go to the edge. Why do people climb mountains? To go to the edge. People always want to go to extremes. And if you go to the edge, you must be prepared to fall off. And lots of guys have."

So it's inevitable? "Well, some people don't need it at all — but seemingly all the artists that I rate have, one way or another, gone to the extremes. Some made it back and wrote about that experience, and others didn't. To this day I'd love to hear what Hendrix would have done, or what Elvis would have done after their experiences."

"Now, lest you are mistaken, I myself don't take drugs." THE "honest contradictions" Lynott speaks of apply to more facets of Thin Lizzy than just the ambiguity of his lyrics. For instance, after a night of excess and little sleep, one could forgive Lizzy for being below their best at the next gig at the Stadium in Offenbach, a suburb of Frankfurt. Nevertheless it was, as I indicated earlier, an inspiring performance — another example of Lizzy providing much more than the goods, when you least expect it.

The audience was as raucous as any I've seen in Britain, and even more impressive when you consider that, once more, these were people who in all probability had never seen Thin Lizzy before.

As the hour approached, the atmosphere in the Stadium was seething. We could smell something special. When Gary Moore and

Scot Gorham hit the first chords of "Are You Ready," we knew we weren't wrong.

Lizzy oozed all the magical qualities of a band building acclaim with a new audience. Sadly but inevitably, it's an attitude that we'll never witness in Britain again. I loved seeing it happen. It was Liverpool Stadium, 1976, all over again.

Lizzy jabbed at Offenbach with "Are You Ready," "Bad Reputation" and "Get Out Of Here," coaxed it with the subtleties of "Do Anything You Want To," "Waiting For An Alibi" and "Still In Love With You," brought it to its knees with "Got To Give It Up," "Black Rose" and "Jailbreak," and completed the rout with "Me And The Boys," "Emerald" and "The Rocker."

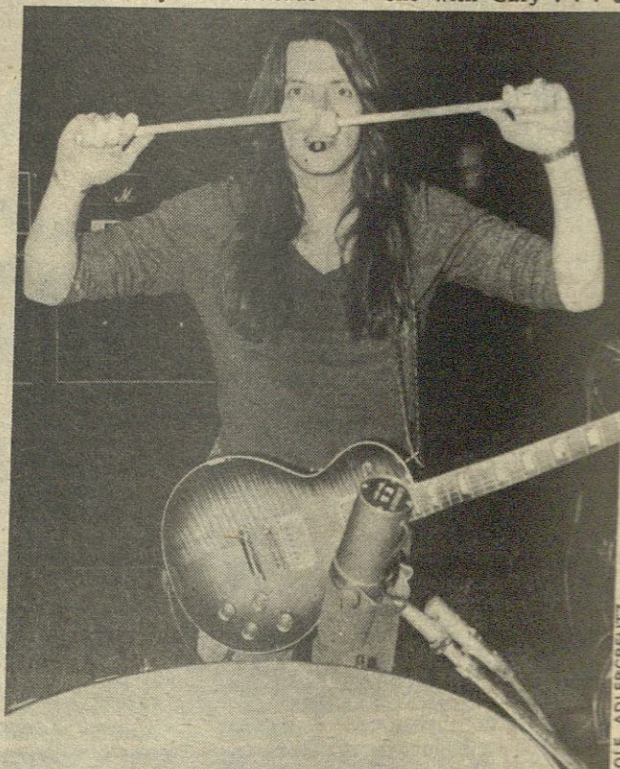
It continues to astound me that Lizzy still project so magnificently. After the years of touring, they refuse to become jaded.

Asked why they now play "Whiskey In The Jar," after fighting it off for so long, Lynott simply counters that Gary Moore knows the song. But doesn't it indicate that Lynott's attitude

has mellowed recently? No, he emphasises. In the wake of the success of "Live And Dangerous," won't Lizzy find it harder to enforce the continual progression upon which they've always insisted? After all, the current set still leans towards "Live And Dangerous" — but Lynott makes no apologies for that.

"I'm progressing the way I've always progressed. When we started off, we'd sing everybody else's numbers. Then, gradually, we introduced our own songs, dropping favourites as we went along, until half the set was original. And that's what I'm doin' now, only we're not goin' fast enough for certain people. But I'm bearing in mind that we have a very large following of loyal Lizzy supporters — and for us to have a radical change, which we don't really want to do yet, would be stupid. We can't totally ignore the fact that 'Live And Dangerous' is our most successful album."

"The next tour we do will be another step away from 'Live And Dangerous.' We're gonna move away from that era with Brian (Robertson) and into another one with Gary... de-



SCOTT GORHAM finds the ultimate cure for hayfever.

pendin' on how long we stay together. The pressure broke up the band before. It could easily break this one. I don't think that we're one of these bands that are gonna last for ever and ever. We could break up at any time... but don't be writing our epitaphs yet because, as far as I'm concerned, we're just starting now. Gary, for the first time, has given full commitment.

"I want to develop more as a songwriter and an artist of some sort. I want to get better and better at it, and I honestly believe that I am improving. But whether I actually move at the rate of speed that people want me to is another thing. Graham Parker hit it right on the head — 'Squeezing Out Sparks.' That's what it's all about. What I can tell you is that the band is goin' through a really creative period at the moment. Things are, very positive for us."

I remind Lynott of a standard criticism which brings into question the strength of the band's ambition. Again, he answers like a man well versed on the subject, one who's read his press cuttings avidly.

"No," he refutes the implication outright. "The point is that we reach a climax with, say, 'Vagabonds Of The Western World.' The pressure of success cracks Eric Bell up. He doesn't want to fly to Paris to mime to 'Whiskey In The Jar.' We do another three albums and we finally get success with Jailbreak. With the success of that album, we just end up talking about drink, fights and love-lives and I get hepatitis. We overcome that and meantime we're recording and building again and we have success with 'Live And Dangerous,' which was to seal an era."

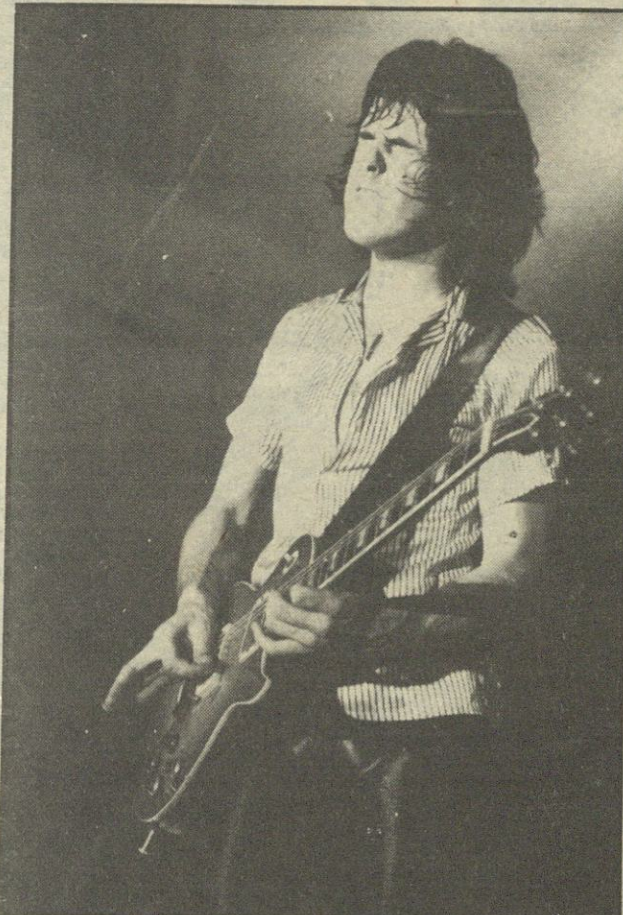
"To some casual observer looking in from outside, they can disregard the kids that have followed us all the way through and have made 'Live And Dangerous' a successful album. I'm not talking just about a double platinum album. I'm talking about an album that was artistically very good. Then people say, 'Now Thin Lizzy have done that, now give us something different.'"

"Well, man, if we were to go out and play a totally original set, that'd be a con. I'm not sayin' that we're pandering to the kids by goin' out and playin' 'Live And Dangerous' every night, but they have made it platinum and we have to play it to them. But, at the same time, we're sayin' that we're gonna do new songs to show that we are a new band; that, by hook or by crook, we'll be dropping the old numbers and they'll be dropped fast and furious. The end of our set will always just be play-time. The serious part is the early part of the set, the first three-quarters, where we're playin' for the music."

"I used to be a dreamer But I realise it's not my style at all And I've become bitter But I believe this is better."

I CASUALLY enquire of Lynott where Lizzy might go from here. It is, it seems, the question of the year.

"A lotta people are worried about where we're goin' from here, and constantly they seem to be sayin' 'Give us a new direction.' 'Do this.' 'Do that.' This is not what we want from Thin Lizzy. And I say, 'Fuck 'em, every one of them.' It's a well-known fact that when a band gets big, they go for the band."



GARY MOORE: that's another finger busted.

The knives get drawn. "The point is that we have always controlled our own career. And that's what we're doing now. Everybody's talkin' about Thin Lizzy as a band that's been around a long time, whereas I think that it's just the start 'cos Gary's in the band now. I don't feel that I should defend 'Black Rose.' For nobody. 'Black Rose' is the start of a change. I can hear a definite change on 'Black Rose.' Our last recorded album was 'Bad Reputation.' There's a hell of a difference between that and 'Black Rose.'"

"I know the way people tell you that when you have millions, there'll be millions of people there to tell you how to spend it? That seems to be the same with success. There seems to be a million people tellin' us how to use our success. How we should find this 'new direction' and how 'Phil has lost the humour in his writin'." I never thought 'Massacre' was that funny a song, you know? I thought it was pretty vicious myself.

"People are sayin' that they want me to be their joker. Well, I'm no dancin' nigger for them. Obviously I'm over-reacting because the press has had a field day on me and my private life. I don't like guttersnipes that take photographs with telescopic lens. The people have a right to know. Bollocks!"

"Like, I've been expectin' that. And if you come over, I'll just tell you to speak to someone else. It's easy. I mean, I know how it's done. I've read a million Van Morrison interviews."



Don't look now but I think we're being followed.